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Describe the history, physical and mineral characteristics of the soil:

Planning and zoning only had the permit for the construction of the home and 2 permits for construction of one shed. The old Platt was reviewed which detailed that the original zoning was for AG-1. The Property Valuation Administration had absolutely no records. I was informed that they only maintained records for 7 years and the county did not even start to maintain any records until 1972 so the final source would be deed records. I did not research deed records since I would infer what the property was used for. Deed records do not necessarily state that this property was used as a farm and in particular, what was grown on it or livestock etc. I visited the aforementioned county government offices on May 19, 2005.

Because we are predominantly dealing with native plants I did not have the extension office perform a detailed soil analysis. The structure itself is mostly clay that is good for holding moisture but bad for allowing oxygen down to the roots. Soil amendments will take care of the latter. I currently test regularly for soil pH and fertility instead of annually through the extension office. Since natives are adapted to our area I felt no need to get an extensive soil analysis done since I have such a variety of plant material.

Soil pH

6.4 are the average of all three landscaped beds. The front foundation landscaping located directly in front of the house has a pH 6.6 and fertility in the low ideal range. The bed running along the sidewalk has a pH of 6.5 and fertility in the low ideal range. Finally, the birdbath has a pH of 5.8 – 6.1 and fertility in the high ideal range. Since the majority of plants require a pH of between 6.5 and 7, these garden beds fall well within average limits. Again, I would spot apply pine needles to evergreens only after the first year and continue to monitor pH readings on a monthly basis to make any necessary adjustments to the amount of acidity needed. Because the beds are mixed with acid loving plants I have chosen to use a rapitest electronic soil tester to analyze pH and fertility on a regular basis versus taking soil samples and sending them out for testing. Since the majority of plant material is native to Kentucky, there should be no problem with them thriving in our local soil.

What soil amendments (fertilizers, compost, etc) will be needed for growing chosen plants?

The first year alone I have estimated the need of 3 yards compost applied at the rate of 1” for the 1,185 square feet of landscape beds in addition to 8 yards mulch applied at the rate of 3” for the 1,185 square feet of landscape beds.

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Why do you regard this landscape as low-maintenance?

weeding and fertilizing requirements are minimal. Usually in the spring of each year the beds will need to be cleaned out from the over wintering dead plant material. Prune shrubs only when necessary such as if the branches are crossing, dead branches or for growth direction. Pull back the mulch to apply a layer of pine needles to the evergreens to acidify their surrounding soil and apply Ringer to the remainder of the bed. Finish the entire bed off with 2" to 3" of mulch, which includes any remaining mulch from the previous year. Future applications of compost are not necessary if Ringer is used; if not, continue to apply compost in each subsequent year as indicated by the pH testing. It is crucial that a maximum of 3" mulch layer be applied and maintained throughout the summer due to our dry conditions. The mulch provides the soil with the ability to retain moisture so watering will be less frequent and will also insulate plants roots well until they reach maturity. This also minimizes plant heaving and keeps undesirable "weeds" from growing.

List maintenance equipment, techniques, and the estimated amount of time needed for weekly maintenance. (Type of mower, trimmer, etc; 1 or ½ or ¼ hour/week)

grass shears, wheelbarrow, kneeling pad, twine, scissors, and work gloves. During the grass growing season, mow grass to a height of 3 ½" which will require ½ hour of your time weekly to complete. During the hottest part of the summer or drought conditions, the grass will go dormant which will require absolutely no mowing. Spring is when the most work will need to be done. Allow 32 hours to complete all the spring clean up chores which are comprised of pruning, weeding, cutting back dead plant material, moving mulch, applying pine needles, ringer or compost and finishing off with a maximum of 3" of mulch. After this major clean up is performed, weekly maintenance should be less than one hour which will be comprised of reviewing the health of the plant material, water as needed, weeding and using the grass shears to manually trim around the garden bed on the outside of the sidewalk. To estimate the total amount of weekly manual labor needed to maintain this landscaping which would be comprised of mowing the grass, watering, weeding, using the grass shears, and reviewing plant material health 2 hours should be more than adequate. It will be less when the grass goes dormant since there will be no need to spend the ½ hour weekly to mow the grass nor to manually use the grass shears to trim around the landscape bed.